

Jeremiah

Many of us reading this article gave our lives to God following an evangelistic meeting and/or a series of Bible studies. Those evangelistic meetings and Bible studies revealed to us the truths and doctrines we hold dear as Seventh-day Adventists, however, there may be a downside to this approach and study of the Scriptures.

Our Christian journey began with us being taught to read the Bible in a rather disjointed way, dipping into a book here and there to find verses that support our doctrinal position without regard to understanding a Biblical book in its entirety. To understand a book, we need to read it in its entirety, even as to appreciate a work of art we need to look at it in its entirety.

This is why the “Follow the Bible” initiative is so beneficial, for it serves to give us a more holistic understanding of the scriptures we treasure as we step back and view its overall beauty.

In re-reading the book of Jeremiah, I have been reminded of the book’s spiritual beauty as I have come to a better understanding of the prophet himself and the way in which we should deliver the prophetic message to a condemned world.

Jeremiah was called to the ministry as a young man while still living in his home town of Anathoth before moving to Jerusalem (Jer 1.1, 6). From the outset, Jeremiah knew that he was to be entrusted with a message which was never going to be received with either a hearty “Amen” or “Praise the Lord”. Indeed God warned Jeremiah that everyone would reject his message! (Jeremiah 1.18,19). (Not hearing an “Amen” in response to our preaching is discouragement enough for some preachers, never mind an outright rejection of our message.)

And yet, despite Jeremiah’s ministry being one filled with rejection, he takes no delight in the prophetic warnings of destruction that are coming upon the people rejecting him. We can only imagine how Jeremiah felt, when it came to his knowledge that the people of his home town wanted him killed if he would not desist from his preaching God’s word (Jer 11.18). The people who wanted to kill Jeremiah were not faceless nameless people, they were from Anathoth, the town of his childhood memories. He would have known many of them and would have regarded them as friends. How sad it must have been for Jeremiah to live in the realisation that his own people wanted him dead!

We can imagine Jeremiah’s eyes welling with tears when the Lord told him what will happen to his home town. “....Their young men will be killed in war; their children will die of starvation. 23 I have set a time for bringing disaster on the people of Anathoth, and when that time comes, none of them will survive.” (Jeremiah 11.22, 23 Today’s English Version).

Rereading Jeremiah should help us to re-evaluate the way in which we deliver our prophetic message for this end time. Jeremiah delivers the message not in a cold condemnatory way, but as one who feels pain and anguish, such as we see in chapter 4 verses 19- 21. “The pain! I can’t bear the pain! My heart! My heart is beating wildly! I can’t keep quiet; I hear the trumpets and the shouts of battle. 20 One disaster follows another; the whole country is left in ruins. Suddenly our tents are destroyed; their curtains are torn to pieces. 21 How long must I see the battle raging and hear the blasts of trumpets?”

Unlike Jonah who wanted to see people destroyed, Jeremiah was a sensitive man who found no delight in forthcoming destruction. Jeremiah found no comfort or delight in pronouncing the

judgement message to his people. The prophetic message was one that weighed heavily upon his heart but he knew he had to deliver it.

Jeremiah is a man for our times. Surely his loving concern should be the hallmark of prophetic preaching today even when we cry “Babylon is fallen, is fallen” (Rev 14.8)

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